

SAVED

by my pet

From the dog who inspired his companion to hit the books to the guinea pig who renewed a nursing home resident's will to live, the animals featured here have been sources of healing and hope just when their human friends have needed it most. Their images and stories earned top billing in The HSUS's Spay Day 2008 Pet Photo Contest.



Striper

Striper came into our lives right after we put our beloved dog, Molly, to sleep following a nine-month battle with cancer. Striper gave us the gift of healing at a time when we all were filled with sadness and loss. He was a gift from God. We used to take him to see my mother-in-law when she was in a nursing home. All the residents who saw him smiled and were filled with joy. My mother-in-law was inspired to take better care of herself so she could see him. At the end of her life, he was one of the only reasons she would smile. He inspires us to love all people and choose to have joy in our lives.

— JENNIFER BATES,
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Fabian

When I found him, Fabian was covered in ticks, he looked like skin draped over bones, he had been shot, he couldn't walk on his back right leg, and he was heartworm-positive. But as soon as he saw me, he picked up a pinecone in his mouth and hopped over to me wagging his tail. He's been mine ever since. I forget about my bad day when Fabian greets me with a shoe in his mouth and a wagging tail. I have been greeted with rocks, pinecones, paint rollers, badminton racquets, sticks, leaves, jackets, and whatever else he can grab with his mouth. Fabian hops around on three good legs and one damaged leg. Yet he still wags his tail, paws at me to pet him, barks at me if I'm not walking fast enough, digs holes better than my other dogs, chases grasshoppers, drools at the sight of treats, and loves people. What more could you ask for?

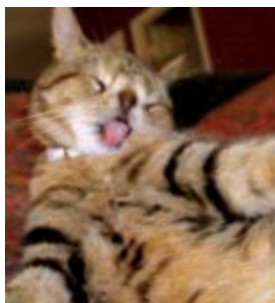
— CHRISTIE LONG,
MARSHALLVILLE, GA



Chaz

Because Chaz is so young and active, he needs a lot of exercise, which gets me out of the house, too. We visit the dog park several times a week and take frequent walks and rides on my recumbent trike. I'm now a busy volunteer for my local golden retriever rescue group, shooting photos of events and producing short videos of the dogs in foster care. Chaz begins therapy dog training this fall so we can visit nursing homes and hospitals to share his special kind of joy. His sudden presence was an avalanche of golden retriever-ness that swept me away the day I adopted him, and it's been all about Chaz ever since.

— DEVON THOMAS TREADWELL, MINNEAPOLIS, MN



Quasi

When I met Quasi, the sneezy little kitty with a cleft lip, it was love at first “snarf.” I adopted her on the spot. She quickly became a wonderful, attention-demanding addition to my family, and I knew I had to give something back. I began

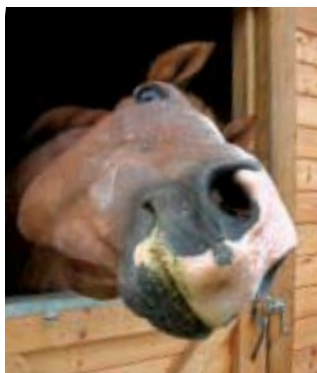
selling pins with a small illustration of Quasi on them in exchange for donations to Cool Cats Rescue in Annapolis. That was two years and \$2,500 ago. Quasi was found as a stray, so no one officially knows what happened to her. The only things we know for sure are that she’s incredibly sweet, likes to sneeze on you in your sleep, and gets caught with her tongue sticking out on a regular basis.

— RENEE DE SIBOUR, BOWIE, MD

Bailey

Not long after I took Bailey home, my marriage ended. Bailey became the rock and the therapist I needed to get through that ordeal. Bailey had trust issues from previous harsh training; I discovered I had them, too. Together, we learned to trust each other. He made me laugh with his goofy faces and let me cry on his neck when I was having a particularly hard day. People often said we had a psychic connection. Sadly, I lost Bailey in July to an inoperable tumor growing on his small intestine. At the moment when he took his last breath, a vision came to me of Bailey running free over a beautiful open green pasture, tail up and head in the sky. That’s how I will always see him.

— TAMMY MCELYEA, LANSING, MI



Fluffy

If I didn’t have my Fluffy, I wouldn’t be the person I am today—a person who wants to help every animal I see on the street. My Fluffy is the reason I graduated from high school and moved on with my life, regardless of the things I went through when he wasn’t around. He owns my heart.

— MILAGROS MATOS, BRONX, NY

Zion

We knew Zion was deaf from the beginning, and that made him super special. He was the loudest little thing ever as a baby—I guess since he couldn’t hear his cries. But he can sleep through anything and doesn’t bark much at all unless he’s playing. He’s a very mellow, sweet, and lovable Great Dane. Zion and our other dog are constant companions for me. They have been my reason for living at times when I have felt depressed. And walking them around the neighborhood is a great way to meet people who stop and talk “dog.” There isn’t much that can get me down to the point that snuggling his soft fur, taking him on his walks, and just seeing him enjoy life can’t cure.

— LISA NORWOOD, WENDELL, NC



Tommy

I’ve been homeless, and I survived on the kindness of others. I try to do what little I can to pay it back—each time, I am rewarded a hundredfold. Tommy looks and acts like an angel, but that isn’t why we took him home. We took him and his buddy, Jack, because we had a home and they didn’t. Tommy and Jack had been turned over to a ferret rescue organization in Las Vegas, and they were adopted by a volunteer. But by the time the volunteer lost his own home, the rescue had closed its doors. We were asked if we could take the two ferrets and, sight unseen, we picked them up and brought them home to join our herd. This will be the last home they will ever know.

— JULIE BROWN, LAS VEGAS, NV



TELL THE WORLD ABOUT YOUR BEST FURRY, FEATHERED, OR FINNED FRIEND by entering our Spay Day 2009 Pet Photo Contest, which raises money for Spay Day USA and Spay Day International. This year’s grand prize winner will be featured in the January-February 2010 issue of *All Animals*. The HSUS coordinates the annual Spay Day celebration, to be held Feb. 24, by working with local humane organizations, veterinary clinics, and volunteers to organize special spay/neuter events, deploy mobile spay/neuter clinics, raise money to subsidize surgeries, and increase awareness throughout the month of February. For details, visit humanesociety.org/spayday.